



The Velvet Hammer – A Useful Tool!

Because it is often times a form of conflict, accountability is one of the greatest missing links in most organizations. Asking somebody why he or she didn't get something done by a due date can be uncomfortable and a lot of managers want to avoid conflict at all cost. But healthy conflict is necessary for an effective team & organization.

The most effective leadership and management teams with which I work have the ability to hold each other accountable but do not take it personally. Without accountability, the company doesn't move forward. In a lot of cases, the company will lose a lot of its higher performers because they know that when something doesn't get done, there won't be any consequences to the individual who did not deliver for the team or the organization.

The Action Plan Register is one of the simplest and most effective tools that I use for accountability. In your next meeting, pull out an action plan register. When anyone agrees to get something done, write down the task, the owner of that task and then ask the owner for a completion date. It doesn't necessarily mean that the owner of the action plan is going to do it themselves or even do it at all. They might delegate the task in total. But the owner is responsible to get it done and will be held accountable for the task.

The next time that group or team gets together the action plan register is the first item on the agenda. Go through it and make sure that things are done by their due date. The action plan register becomes perpetual, which means that you just keep using it over and over again. Once the task is completed to everyone's satisfaction, the action plan comes off. As simple as it is, the action plan register makes accountability for teams a lot easier.

The Velvet Hammer is an analogy SM Advisors uses for holding people accountable. It signifies that each employee will be held accountable but in a professional manner. I have fun with the velvet hammer analogy in my planning sessions. In fact, one of my clients recently gave me a hammer that was wrapped in velvet because they understood the analogy so well. Now I take it to my planning sessions. It's funny, but very subtle and effective. It gets the point across: accountability is necessary and if handled properly it can become the foundation for a high performance culture.

As teams get comfortable with and learn to hold each other accountable, the performance of their team and organization goes to the next level. I encourage each and every team to make an action plan register and use it at your meetings. You can download a template for an Action Plan Register at www.smadvisors.com Remember, Those Who Plan – PROFIT!



Steve Van Remortel is a strategy and talent thought-leader and consultant, blogger, professional speaker, certified behavioral analyst and author of the award-winning book, "Stop Selling Vanilla Ice Cream." You can reach him at steve@stopsellingvanillaicecream.com. Register for his free monthly strategy and talent newsletter at www.stop-selling-vanilla-ice-cream.com or www.smadvisors.com. A column is published weekly and you can sign up for "The Scoop" eNewsletter at www.stop-selling-vanilla-ice-cream.com.

